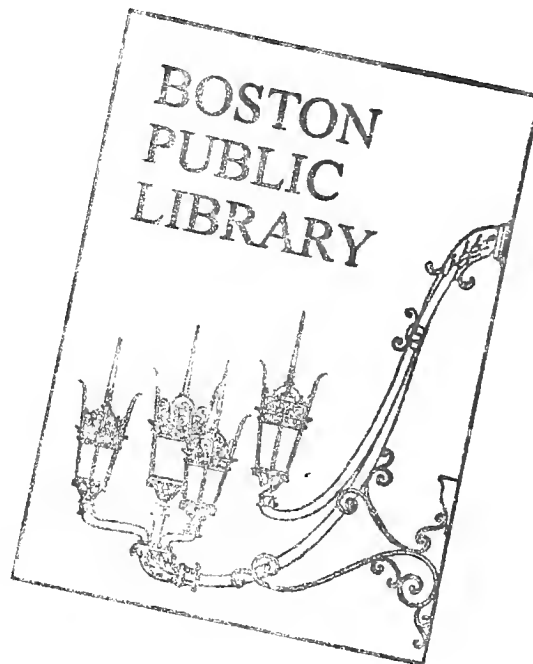


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BOSTON HARBOR OPEN SPACE SYSTEM
A PLANNING FRAMEWORK



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BOSTON HARBOR OPEN SPACE SYSTEM A PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This planning framework has been designed to serve as a blueprint to guide the continuing revitalization of Boston harbor's open space system. In keeping with the intent of the city's current Open Space Plan, it recommends the consolidation of existing open space facilities and identifies opportunities to be realized by future programs and projects along the shoreline. The outline builds on and extends the work of various agencies and groups, especially the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Metropolitan District Commission, to protect and provide public access to open space on the waterfront.

The concerns of the framework are driven by the larger vision of the Flynn Administration to equitably share the resources of the harbor for recreational as well as economic benefits for the city's residents. The ongoing Boston Harbor Cleanup Project will soon initiate a resurgence in water related activity which, with the provision of broad public access, will add a new dimension to the quality of life in Boston.

Boston's Municipal Harbor Plan, the product of a decade long community based effort by the City, articulates this vision through four comprehensive planning policies : (1) Access to opportunities on the harbor (2) growth that is appropriately designed and brings vitality (3) activating the waterfront through public, cultural and water dependent uses and (4) enhancing maritime activities.

DISTRICTS

As a first step toward adopting and implementing the above policies, this blueprint establishes districts which encompass neighborhood level open space systems. The intention is to emphasize the distinct local character which make the different areas unique in their own right. Existing shoreline features, neighborhood land uses, zoning boundaries and history of public use provide the context to delineate and establish themes which bind a particular district. The framework establishes the following:

1. Enhancing Olmsted's Vision : The South Boston Historic Shoreline
2. Linking Institutional Development : The Columbia Point Promenade
3. Creating Recreational Opportunities : The Dorchester Bay Area
4. Preserving the Irreplacable : The Neponset Conservation Park
5. Creating New Linkages : The Orient Heights Bay Area
6. Reclaiming the Harbor : The East Boston Waterfront
7. Opening and Accessing a Renewed District : Fort Point
8. The Boston Harbor Islands

9. Diversifying the Open Space Experience : Charlestown
10. Completing the Esplanade : The Charles River Crossing
11. Realization of the Public Realm : The North End / Downtown
12. Port Norfolk / Lower Mills / Neponset River

The range of these themes and corresponding districts assert the inherent character of an urban seashore : That it reflect the diversity of the city by creating a rich and varied choice of physical settings and cultural as well as recreational experiences for residents. However, hand in hand with diversity the urban context also means that various interests are competing for a piece of the harbor. Further community based planning will need to address the conflicts between neighborhood use and city-wide use, between encouraging private development and public access, and between protecting natural resources and seeking increased visitation to resource areas.

GUIDELINES

District associated themes underpin the open space recommendations outlined in the pages below. In addition, the following guidelines will serve as criteria to locate open space development so that a rich mix of harbor uses is ensured.

In each district:

Projects should maximize recreational potential with the creation of destination oriented facilities like recreational/cultural centers, restored beaches, bath houses, expanded sports facilities, and miniature amusement parks.

Projects should ensure the enhancement of environmental resources through the stabilization of unique ecosystems, with educational programs and through increased visitation opportunities. The city's youth should be especially targeted to enjoy and maintain these resources.

Proposed open space improvements should go hand-in-hand with housing and economic development. These improvements should encourage water related commercial activity including boat rentals, recreational marinas, and fishing with supporting cafes and restaurants. They should encourage increasing visitation to enable year-long activity.

LINKAGES

While each district will have its unique attractions derived from the above mix of activities, critical to open space investment opportunities will also be a system of linkages which ensure pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, public transportation and water shuttle access to the harbor. This issue will be addressed by an access plan which will view connections to inland facilities from the harborwalk spine to be as critical to harbor access as enlarging the harbor ferry network.

This would require:

Completion of Phase II of Harborwalk in the Fort Point Channel, Columbia Point, Dorchester, East Boston and Charlestown areas.

Links to Harborwalk from inland facilities like neighborhood parks and the Emerald Necklace system, especially through pedestrian paths and public transit.

A ferry network which links the Harbor Islands and existing downtown piers to docking areas in neighborhood locations on the Harborwalk.

MANAGEMENT

The implementation of the recommendations of this section require long term investment of capital and human resources which may be beyond the limited city and state means currently available. Clearly, a series of innovative institutional and financial measures will be required in the coming years. The formation of the Joint Commission on The Future of Boston Beaches by Mayor Flynn and Governor Weld is the first step in that direction.

The planning framework in establishing well defined district boundaries will facilitate the complex exercise of implementing potential projects and programs. Within the confines of a manageable area, ownership, jurisdiction and operations responsibilities will be fine tuned or, conversely, consolidated under an appropriate agency or entity in each district. A full matrix of management models will be considered, ranging from National Park Service ownership to a lease hold arrangement with a non-profit "Harbor Development Corporation", depending on the attributes of a particular district.

ENHANCING OLMSTED'S VISION : THE SOUTH BOSTON HISTORIC SHORELINE

An emphasis on the rich history of this section of Boston's shoreline can be the central theme to guide the next phase of its revitalization. Castle Island and Marine Park are the waterfront segments of Olmsted's vision. Fort Independence, recently improved by a multi-million dollar investment by the MDC, has a military history going back to the 17th century. Supporting the strength of this theme as a magnet is the diversity lend to it by the City improved facilities at the L Street Bath House and at Columbus Park.

Recommendations

The Castle Island area has been already developed by the MDC as a major attraction for the community. With an eye toward balancing local neighborhood and city-wide visitation interests existing facilities could be programmed for enhanced use : Castle Island to be established as a museum and historic interpretative center and Pleasure Bay developed for water based sports like swimming.

MDC's existing fishing pier could attract additional use with the building of a small scale fish cleaning facility.

In coordination with the expansion of Kelly's Landing, public incentives could be offered to the adjacent private yacht clubs to increase their membership.

Examine with the MDC the feasibility of reusing their Bath House at Carson Beach, perhaps with a water pool and restaurant, and with trolley shuttle connections to the JFK 'T' station.

Provide designated pedestrian crossings from Columbus Park to the Strandway.

Seek to reduce regional traffic at Day Boulevard.

Emphasize the development of Columbia Road and Summer Street as tree lined thoroughfares to provide inland access links.

Provide designated pedestrian paths from Telegraph Hill and Independence Square to the shoreline.

CREATING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES: THE DORCHESTER BAY AREA

The proximity of McConnell Playground and Malibu Beach to Dorchester Yacht Club Bay provides the possibility of developing that enclosed water body as a regional aquatic park with a recreational emphasis. Further, current MDC planning and implementation efforts will finally provide continuous pedestrian access from the Yacht Club area to Tenean Beach, potentially increasing the points of entry from neighborhood streets to the water's edge and to its recreational facilities.

Recommendations :

Utilizing Dorchester Yacht Club Bay's protected waters, develop the area as an Aquatic Park for passive and active water-oriented recreation.

The MDC has developed beaches and supporting facilities at Malibu and Tenean Beaches. Existing bath houses and pavilions could be expanded, a water pool built, and a dinghy dock and possible boat rental provided at Tenean Beach.

Support efforts to improve water quality in Dorchester Bay.

Integrate McConnell Park with Malibu Beach and Dorchester Yacht Club Bay by landscaped lawns and paths.

Support MDC's current capital program to complete Harborwalk by linking Tenean Beach to Savin Hill by the construction of a boardwalk along the SE Expressway embankment to Victory Road Park.

Recommend to MDC that in their negotiations with Boston Gas they expand access as well as passive recreational opportunities in the plans to dismantle one of the gas tanks. They could also enhance access from Morrissey Boulevard to Victory Road abutting the Freeport Street off-ramp.

Support current plans to provide a new 'T' station in conjunction with the Old Colony project near the proposed MBTA bridge with connections to a pier facility.

With sidewalk improvements and a tree planting program designate pedestrian paths from Savin Hill Park to Malibu Beach and the marsh areas.

Expand public access from McConnell Park along the periphery of the expressway to connect the public beach at Clam Point via a boardwalk.

PRESERVING THE IRREPLACABLE : THE NEPONSET CONSERVATION PARK

The Neponset shoreline has a unique ecosystem with rare and vulnerable environmental qualities. The sustained efforts of the MDC and community groups has kept out undesirable uses from the area. While pressing for this system's continuing protection these recommendations also emphasize the need for developing a greater diversity in park uses to stabilize the area. Carefully sited, intensive recreation uses would attract visitors, exposing a larger number of city residents to the Neponset's natural attributes.

Recommendations :

Implement environmental management measures to be taken to preserve and stabilize the ecosystem of this unique waterfront area.

Support the MDC's, the City's Environment Department's and community efforts to build the CONRAIL rail road right of way from Port Norfolk to Central Avenue as a pedestrian / bicycle path to link the entire Neponset shoreline.

On an accessible and well connected site develop as a permanent facility an Environmental Education and Nature Center.

Support the MDC in the development of the Hallet Street Dump and Drive-in sites for programmed and intensive recreational uses. Recommend that they explore the potential for concessions.

Designate a trail system with board walks, nature observation areas, and decks for rafts and canoes.

Develop a path from Dorchester Park along Cedar Grove Cemetery to the Neponset shoreline.

With a new station at the Neponset publicize the use of the Ashmont Mattapan line for inland links to the Dorchester neighborhood from the shoreline.

Recommend that the state DPW establish a strong planting buffer between the Southeast Expressway and the marsh.

Seek continued improvements in water quality.

CREATING NEW LINKAGES : ORIENT HEIGHTS BAY PARK

With the linking of Belle Isle Marsh and Wood Island Bay Marsh to the Orient Heights beach area complementing open space experiences can become accessible to the neighborhood as a single system. These new connections would open up new opportunities in the development of the bay despite the continuing disturbance from the airport.

Recommendations :

Recommend to the MDC to expand the Orient Heights Recreation Center in conjunction with the Porazzo Rink complex to establish the area as a node of activity.

Extend the beach through a 'harborwalk' path past the Orient Heights Yacht Club to the Bayswater Street urban wild and finally to Belle Isle Marsh.

Provide access to Wood Island Bay Marsh from the beach through Coleridge Street and the MBTA Extension urban wild.

At both Wood Island Bay and Belle Isle marshes examine the viability of expanding the trail system with designated walkways, board walks and nature observation areas or alternatively, encourage the MDC's and community based canoeing programs.

Develop a plan with the MDC to build a water pool and playground at the western edge of Orient Heights beach and improve existing recreational facilities.

Provide links to and program the active recreation facilities at Noyes Playground.

At the end of Neptune Street, at the concrete break water edge, construct a pavilion with Olmsted references.

Expand the Orient Heights Yacht Club to provide a docking pier.

LINKING INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT : THE COLUMBIA POINT PROMENADE

Columbia Point has a rich mix of rapidly growing institutional and residential uses. A local open space system which takes advantage of the water's edge as well as links these developments can transform the Columbia Point waterfront into a thriving promenade. MDC's current harbor walk construction at Harbor Point is the first step in that direction.

Recommendations :

Support the MDC's efforts to develop a landscaped park at the Bayside Expo site to complete harborwalk and link Columbus Park to Columbia Point. .

Recommend to the MDC that as an extension to their current Harborpoint Park construction they improve Mothers Rest as a public facility.

Establish Harborwalk connection between Harborpoint and Kennedy Library.

In coordination with the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, support the planning to develop a family park, Harborwalk, and other facilities adjacent to the Calf Pasture urban wild.

Reuse the Pump House for cultural activities, conference center and supporting retail and student facilities.

Encourage plans to develop the docking piers at the JFK Library for public boats.

Recommend bus loops between the JFK Library and Castle Island via the JFK 'T' station.

RECLAIMING THE HARBOR : THE EAST BOSTON WATERFRONT

Similar to the state of North End's waterfront five years ago, East Boston currently has a number of piers between LoPresti and Porzio Parks which are currently underutilized. These offer an opportunity to reclaim the waterfront for neighborhood use. If the proposed projects for the piers are coordinated a multi-dimensional promenade consisting of active and passive recreation, maritime industry and housing uses can be created.

Recommendations

The Parks Department's Porzio and LoPresti parks, both with recent multi-million dollar investments, can serve as anchors to a harborwalk extending from Jeffries Point to the Maverick area. The first segment which connects the airport shuttle docking area to Porzio has been completed by Massport.

Support Massport's project to develop a six acre park at Pier 4 in conjunction with a Lobster Facility on Pier 5. Advocate inter-agency involvement in design development of the proposed 10 acre park on Pier 3. Support the Citizens Advisory Committee appointed to oversee the project. Seek to link 'Golden Stairs' and 'Rockies' open spaces to the pier developments.

Clean-up publicly owned parcels adjacent to the Jeffries Point Yacht Club and make land available for club expansion in return for public access paths.

Renovate Lewis Mall as a major landscaped pedestrian connection from the Maverick Square neighborhood to the waterfront. Coordinate this with the MBTA's current reconstruction of the T station at the square.

Support the BRA's efforts to reactivate the Clippership Wharf project, given the potential of a public water shuttle dock close to rapid transit.

Establish connections between the community and the proposed 12 acre park at the 'Park and Fly' parking lot as well as the East Boston Stadium.

Establish public access along the water's edge at Hodge Boiler Works through acquisition/easement or the like, providing connections to Lo Presti Park with proposed Clippership Wharf development.

REALIZATION OF THE PUBLIC REALM: THE NORTH END / DOWNTOWN

The provision of public access and a diversified public open space system has nearly been completed along the North End/Downtown waterfront. Recent accomplishments such as the Rose Kennedy Garden, the rehabilitation of Langone Park and Puopolo Playground, and the completion of Long Wharf Phase I offer nearby residents active and passive recreational opportunities. In addition, private developments will significantly add to the neighborhood's open space. A continuation of these and related open space plans is necessary to regain the waterfront for the public's use and enjoyment.

Recommendations

Extend Harborwalk along the water side of Puopolo Playground, linking it to the U.S. Coast Guard's Walk-to-the-Sea.

Complete the Long Wharf improvements, including additional open space, harborwalk, dockage for commercial vessels and a public landing.

Continue the development and provision of community programs such as sailing, where appropriate.

Provide piers programmed for docking, where appropriate.

Unify the planned/completed pedestrian pathways and open spaces adjoining the waterfront with the planned pedestrian links and open spaces that result as a part of the depression of the Central Artery.

COMPLETING THE ESPLANADE: THE CHARLES RIVER CROSSING

The Charles River shore from Monsignor O'Brien Highway to the North Washington Street Bridge is the uncompleted segment of parkland between the Esplanade and the North End district of Harbor Park. Historically, it is an area of intense transportation use: in the area the Orange Line passes under the river; the locks provide passage on the river; and the O'Brien Highway bridges pass over all of this. In the coming years, the Central Artery Project will create a new highway crossing, a new water transit stop, and a new configuration for Leverett Circle. The new Boston Garden project will initiate more intense land uses adjoining this area. The Central Artery Project is providing substantial funding for parkland construction on both sides of the river. A parkland design in the Crossing area must integrate these transportation and development plans with an open space system which completes the parkland uses on the river's edge.

Recommendations :

Support the Charles River Crossing Advisory Committee established to advise the Central Artery Project on design of parkland in the crossing area.

Provide program requirements for a water transit stop at Lovejoy Wharf which will meet the needs of a full inner harbor water transit system.

Integrate the parkland plans with the city's downtown-wide commuter bicycle program.

Identify, protect, and enhance corridors of pedestrian access from the Bulfinch Triangle and West End areas to the expanded parkland and across the river to Charlestown.

DIVERSIFYING THE OPEN SPACE EXPERIENCE: CHARLESTOWN

Charlestown's waterfront from the Little Mystic Channel to the Paul Revere Landing Park affords unique opportunities for creating a variety of open space and recreational uses on both land and water. Rich in history, skirting a densely populated neighborhood, in close proximity to Downtown Boston and with links to the Charles River Basin Open Space System, this area of Boston's waterfront has the potential of providing its open space users a diverse and enriching outdoor experience.

Recommendations :

Realize the potential of the Little Mystic Channel as a unique open space resource - renovate the existing Harborwalk, construct the missing segments of Harborwalk, create a large public open space at end of the Channel for passive and active recreation, create opportunities for water-based recreation.

Support plans to provide a Harborwalk segment on the northern edge of the Channel in conjunction with an overflow parking area for the new Aquarium at the Navy Yard.

Support plans, as outlined in the Charlestown Navy Yard Master Plan, to create within the Yard a public open space network that will reinforce the unique historical character of the Navy Yard. System. These plans include:

- A continuous Harborwalk along the water's edge extending from the Little Mystic Channel to the National Historical Park.
- Tree-lined streetscape with appropriately designed lighting, seating, and paving; pedestrian corridors on Second Avenue and Flirtation Walk.
- Major new open spaces at Yard's End and improvements to Shipyard Park.
- Court yards and plazas containing fine paving materials, seating, lighting, and plantings.
- Extension of Pier 3 for public recreation, with docking and shelter pavilions adaptable to community uses.
- Water shuttle terminal at Yard's End for direct access to Downtown Boston.

Coordinate with the BRA in the planning of the CANA open space network. These consist of passive and active recreational spaces connected to Harborwalk at the water's edge.

Support the incorporation of a Harborwalk on Tudor Wharf in order to complete Charlestown's Harborwalk from the Little Mystic Channel to Paul Revere Landing.

Support plans to connect the Harborwalk east of the Charlestown Bridge with the Charles River Basin Open Space System west of the Charlestown Bridge via pedestrian connections under and on the bridge.

THE BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS

The Boston Harbor Islands, isolated due to their natural setting, are one of the most fragile, vulnerable and disassociated resources in Boston's open space system. However, in their current form they are also essentially one dimensional--their attraction is mainly as a natural resource and attracts a limited range of visitor groups. Diverse uses, focussed on recreational developments, need to be added. Quality of life would be positively impacted if issues related to maintenance, supervisory personnel and maintenance are addressed.

Recommendations

In keeping with DEM's 1986 Harbor Islands State Park Master Plan support intensive use of Georges, Spectacle, Peddocks and Long Islands; moderate use of Bumpkin, Gallops, Grape and Lovells; and low visitation for the Brewster group, Rainsford, and Slate.

Provide affordable public access to the first two groups of islands, with an emphasis on shuttle departures from neighborhood locations.

Document and map all conservation lands on the islands, specify those to be of critical environmental concern, and develop a natural resource protection plan for their permanent maintenance.

In the long term relieve pressure on Georges Island as the main terminal by establishing the rebuilt Spectacle as an additional ferry base.

Provide management facilities and visitor information centers at Spectacle and Long, to add to those at Georges and Gallop islands.

Working with the Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands, Inc., other advocacy groups, and the state, develop a program to provide year-round caretakers on all islands with structures.

Support the Spectacle Island Advisory Committee appointed for the Central Artery Project in reconstructing the island as a major recreational site and as a natural resource for Boston.

Support the sequenced development as proposed in the Long Island Master Plan. Protection from the existing hazards in preparation for the future development of park infrastructure, should be the focus over the next five years.

Harbor Islands continued

The DEM Master Plan study of 1986, should be reevaluated for current relevance. Programmatic uses for existing buildings and other structures, for open space recreational uses, and for educational and scientific uses should be determined by a public participation process.

To improve the current use of the islands educate visitors as to the the importance of a pack-it-in, pack-it-out trash policy, conservation of natural resources and boating safety. Discourage vandalism through signage and a program of law enforcement developed and implemented with the help of citizen volunteers.

Provide a sufficient number of toilet facilities on Peddocks, Lovell's, Spectacle, Long and George's islands to accommodate estimated visitors and staff. Limit the other islands to pit toilets. Initiate a study of innovative toilet technology.